



**A STUDY ON PROBLEM BASED LEARNING METHOD FOR
ENGLISH READING TEACHING OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS IN CHINA: A CASE STUDY OF EXPERIMENTAL
MIDDLE SCHOOL ATTACHED TO Yunnan NORMAL UNIVERSITY
(JIAN SHE ROAD CAMPUS)**

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**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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UNIVERSITY (JIAN SHE ROAD CAMPUS)**

Thematic Certificate

To

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This Independent Study has been Approved as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of International Master of Business Administration in International Business Management

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Declaration

I, MA YA', hereby certify that the work embodied in this independent study entitled "A STUDY ON PROBLEM BASED LEARNING METHOD FOR ENGLISH READING TEACHING OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHINA: A CASE STUDY OF EXPERIMENTAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ATTACHED TO Yunnan NORMAL UNIVERSITY (JIAN SHE ROAD CAMPUS)" is result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.



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Sept 1, 2022

ABSTRACT

Title: A Study on Problem Based Learning Method for English Reading Teaching of Junior High School Students in China: A Case Study of Experimental Middle School Attached To Yunnan Normal University (Jian She Road Campus)

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Teaching English in junior high school serves as a link between English in primary school and senior high school. It plays an important role from the top to the bottom and should not be overlooked. Reading is an important way to obtain effective information is the core focus of teaching in English. The influence of exam-oriented education in China shows many schoolteachers and parents have ignored the importance of comprehensive English skills and still choose traditional teaching mode and teaching methods: teacher-centered, passive acceptance of language knowledge by students (fill-in-the-blank teaching), where students' active learning initiative and creativity are not met and developed, resulting in inefficient learning.

The Problem Based Learning teaching method, a more popular teaching method in higher education, is widely used for the education of medical students. As a more efficient learning tool, it advocates student-centered learning, focuses on the improvement of students' personal abilities and the acquisition of professional skills, breaks the confines of the traditional teaching model, and should be actively extended to the education system of general secondary schools.

This paper explored Problem Based Learning, a problem-based teaching model, which was based on setting a situational learning environment where teachers adopt a problem-oriented approach to guide students in their learning so that they can give full play to their own potential. The teacher uses a problem-

develop their full potential in acquiring, processing, analyzing, solving problems, develop active learning habits. If this approach is applied to the teaching of English reading in junior high school, it can improve the quality of teaching, motivate students' enthusiasm for learning, develop their comprehensive language skills, stimulate students' learning initiative, expression, imagination, observation, innovation, and teamwork skills.

Keywords: Problem-based Learning, English reading, junior high school, effective teaching



摘要

题目: Problem Based Learning 问题教学法在中国初中英语阅读教学中的应用研究---以
云南师大实验中学(建设路校区)初二学生为例

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在当今中国的英语教育中,初中英语教学是作为小学英语和高中英语的链接,起着承上启下的重要作用,不容忽视。阅读是获取有效信息的重要途径,在英语教学中也是教学的核心和重点。长期以来,因为受到中国应试教育的影响,许多学校的老师和家长忽略了英语综合能力的重要性,在教学模式和教学方法上仍旧选择传统的教学方式:以教师为中心,学生被动的进行语言知识的接受(填鸭式教学),学生的学习积极主动性和创造性得不到满足和发展,导致学习效率低下。

而 PBL (Problem-based Learning) 教学法作为在高等教育中较为流行的教学方式,在医学生的教育中得到广泛的应用。作为一种较为高效的学习手段,其倡导以学生为中心的学习,关注学生个人能力的提升和专业技能的掌握,打破传统教学模式的禁锢,应该积极推广到普通中学的教育体制中。

本文探究 PBL (Problem-Based Learning) 是:基于问题为导向的教学模式,正是通过设置一个情景学习的环境,教师采用问题导向的方式来引导学生在进行学习,使学生在获取问题,处理问题,分析问题和解决问题的过程中能够充分发挥自身的潜能,养成积极主动的良好学习习惯。若该教学方法应用在初中英语阅读教学中,可以提高教师的教学质量,能够调动学生的学习热情,培养学生的语言综合运用能力,激发学生的学习主动性,表达能力、想象能力、观察能力、创新能力和小组团队协作的能力。

关键词: PBL 教学法 中学英语教学 阅读 有效教学

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

English reading has become an important part of the English subject in the Junior Secondary School Academic Level Examination, with the largest number of marks, and one of the four important skills of English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to the new curriculum standards, English Language Teaching Curriculum Standards for Junior High Schools 2017 is gradually realized through the specific language process, and teachers should actively explore effective ways of teaching and learning (2017).

For most Chinese students who lack adequate resources, reading plays an irreplaceable role in developing language skills, which can help to improve overall language skills. However, it is not difficult to find that the process of educational reform in the English curriculum has also revealed some problems. For example, the traditional teaching philosophy has not been fundamentally changed and the concept has not been fundamentally altered (Chi, 2018). Teachers are concerned, still more concerned with developing students' reading skills and teaching reading for the purpose of examinations, often neglect the creation of reading themes or authentic contexts, fail to dig deeper into the meaning of the themes, and lack in-depth analysis of the texts. English reading teaching is still teacher-centered, concentrating on vocabulary and grammar, with sentence-by-sentence explanations or translations (Chisholm,2005). To meet the requirements of the English curriculum reform, teachers still need to change, learn advanced teaching concepts, and eventually adapt to meet the requirements of developing human resources (Suzie & Jane, 2017).

The PBL approach meets the requirements of the new curriculum standards and improves the teaching of reading (Chi, 2018). The teaching method is characterized by being student-centered, asking students' questions, allowing them to work cooperatively to find answers on their own or in small groups, and analyzing problems and solving them. (Loyens, 2014)

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the theoretical and practical foundations of the PBL method, this paper explores whether the PBL method can get an improvement in English reading skills in junior high school through an experiment (Chisholm,2005). In traditional reading teaching, grammar-oriented and teacher-centered approaches emphasize learning

vocabulary and analyzing more difficult sentence structures, making it difficult for students to improve their independent reading skills and understand reading content in depth (Chi, 2018).

Many scholars have tried to apply the problem teaching method to English reading teaching, to improve the current situation of English reading teaching. This paper applies the PBL teaching method to junior high school English reading teaching and is dedicated to exploring how targeted reading teaching activities can improve students' overall English reading ability, which, in addition to better understanding the content of the text, helps them to link their knowledge of the text to real-life situations and truly apply what they have learned, as well as prompting students to dig deeper into the breadth and depth of the text to be reflected (Chi, 2018). This paper mainly focuses on introducing the research background, research objectives and research questions, and is a study of the effectiveness and feasibility of the PBL method in junior high school English reading teaching (Suzie & Jane, 2017).

Therefore, there are three questions that need to be explored in this paper.

1. Through the PBL approach, can students take the initiative to search for questions designed by the teacher before the lesson, and do some in-depth thinking, discussion, and summarizing, which can contribute to the learning of the chapter in class?

2. Can students use the PBL approach to prepare for class and to discuss in class, and can they use the PBL approach to sublimate what they have learned in class and connect it with real life so that they can put it into practice in their learning life?

3. The same teacher teaches two parallel classes of the same grade with the same number of students at the same level of learning, using the PBL method in Experiment Class A and the traditional method in Experiment Class B. Does the teacher teach the same reading chapter, and the classroom tests are the same?

1.3 Objective of the study

All language knowledge should be presented and learned from the perspective of language use, in order to enhance students' ability to "do things in English", and the teaching theory and characteristics of PBL are well suited to this, and are well reflected (Chi, 2018).

According to the middle school English textbook ,grade 8 on unit6,2b (the new curriculum standards of the new Ren Jiao version) has task's characteristic module (the

content is also the course content of this thesis to conduct teaching research), aims to make teachers and students give full play to their autonomy in teaching through a certain task situation, trying to teach language teaching through the implementation of a series of complete teaching activities project, in which the teacher asks questions, provides students with a search for reading material related to the topic of the unit, and it uses questions as a guide for teaching activities, with the development of students' language skills as the primary teaching task (Markham, Larmer, & Ravitz, 2003).

Students are inspired by it and aroused to carry out a particular activity in English; the teacher guides students in an inquiry-based learning process based on the steps designed by the textbook for researching the topic, extending the training of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English from inside the classroom to outside the classroom. Students complete a specific topic in English through group discussion, division of labor, investigation, and interview, information retrieval, communication and reporting, concrete implementation and learning life, and other forms of activities, and finally present the learning results and creatively complete the learning task (Chi, 2018). The English classroom should become a process in which students construct knowledge, develop skills, expand their horizons, activate their thinking, and show their personality under the guidance of the teacher. (Suzie & Jane, 2017). With the implementation of the new curriculum, it is even more important for students to develop their interest in learning and their learning ability and developing students' learning ability with multiple intelligences by optimizing classroom teaching strategies is undoubtedly an avenue worth exploring (Buck, 2007).

This method of teaching can not only meet the requirements of modern talent development but is also consistent with the curriculum. According to current research, the PBL approach has a positive impact on students' professional practice and the process of language learning.

a. It is develops students' surface understanding of reading but also digs deeper and uncovers the deeper meaning of the text.

b. Applying the PBL method to English reading helps students to be able to grasp the lectures better, understand them more deeply, can be integrated with real life, and can also build up their confidence in learning and stimulate their interest in learning.

c. It also helps teachers to better design their teaching, to give more initiative to students, and let them become the main body of the classroom, with the teacher only acting as a mentor to guide, direct and correct so that they can better reflect on their

teaching and thus improve their teaching design.

1.4 Scope of the study

According to the theory of PBL, the characteristics of the method and the basic process, the scope of this study was to conduct a class experiment with a total of 100 students from the Grade Two Class 4 and the Class 10 of Experimental Middle School Attached To Yunnan Normal University (Jian She Road Campus). The students in both classes were taught by the same teacher, and their English proficiency was similar, but the two classes were taught the same reading text using the PBL method and the traditional method, but with different teaching methods and 45 minutes of lesson time. The difference in learning outcomes between the two classes, when taught by the same teacher using different teaching methods, is used to understand the current state of English reading teaching and learning in junior high school.

1. The students in Class 4, grade 2 were the experimental group A, using the PBL teaching method.

2. The students in Class 10, grade 2 were the experimental group B, using the traditional teaching method.

1.5 Research Significance

PBL (Problem-Based-Learning) focuses on problem-solving, which as a driving force, group elaboration, presentation, discussion, and mutual communication as a means to stimulate students' active self-learning and develop students' innovative thinking as the main goal (Tao, 2015). PBL is considered an important teaching method. It is problem-centered, learner-centered, and based on theories of constructivism, humanism, and collaborative learning. Through collaborative learning, as students solve these problems, they learn to solve them in authentic settings and get to improve their ability to integrate problem solving skills (Guo, 2015).

This research attempts to demonstrate the theoretical significance and learning objectives of the PBL method to reading instruction can improve students' English reading efficiency and stimulate their interest in learning. Students are actively involved in the teaching sessions, and teachers focus on guiding students to master the main idea and structure of the text. More importantly, teachers pay attention to enlightening students' relevant background knowledge and experience so that students can have a deep understanding of the content of the chapter they are studying, master it and link it

to their lives, and not just stay within the confines of textbooks and exam questions. The aim is particularly to highlight the development of students' independent self-learning skills, creative thinking skills, the ability to organize information, and the ability to be creative so that they can develop the habit of independent thinking and independent learning (Suzie & Jane, 2017). Through the study, it can be found that the PBL teaching method can obviously go far to meet the requirements of the teaching objectives and overcome the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods and attack the defects of traditional teaching methods. Therefore, it is feasible and of great significance to explore the PBL teaching method in junior high school English reading teaching (Tao, 2015).

1.6 Theoretical framework

This thesis is mainly based on the theory of PBL (Problem-Based Learning) as the basis, through the PBL teaching model and its characteristics using a mixed research approach, focusing on the analysis of the beneficial aspects of the PBL teaching method in English reading in junior high school. In the course of this study, I also briefly compare and illustrate the PBL teaching method with the traditional teaching method (Suzie & Jane, 2017).

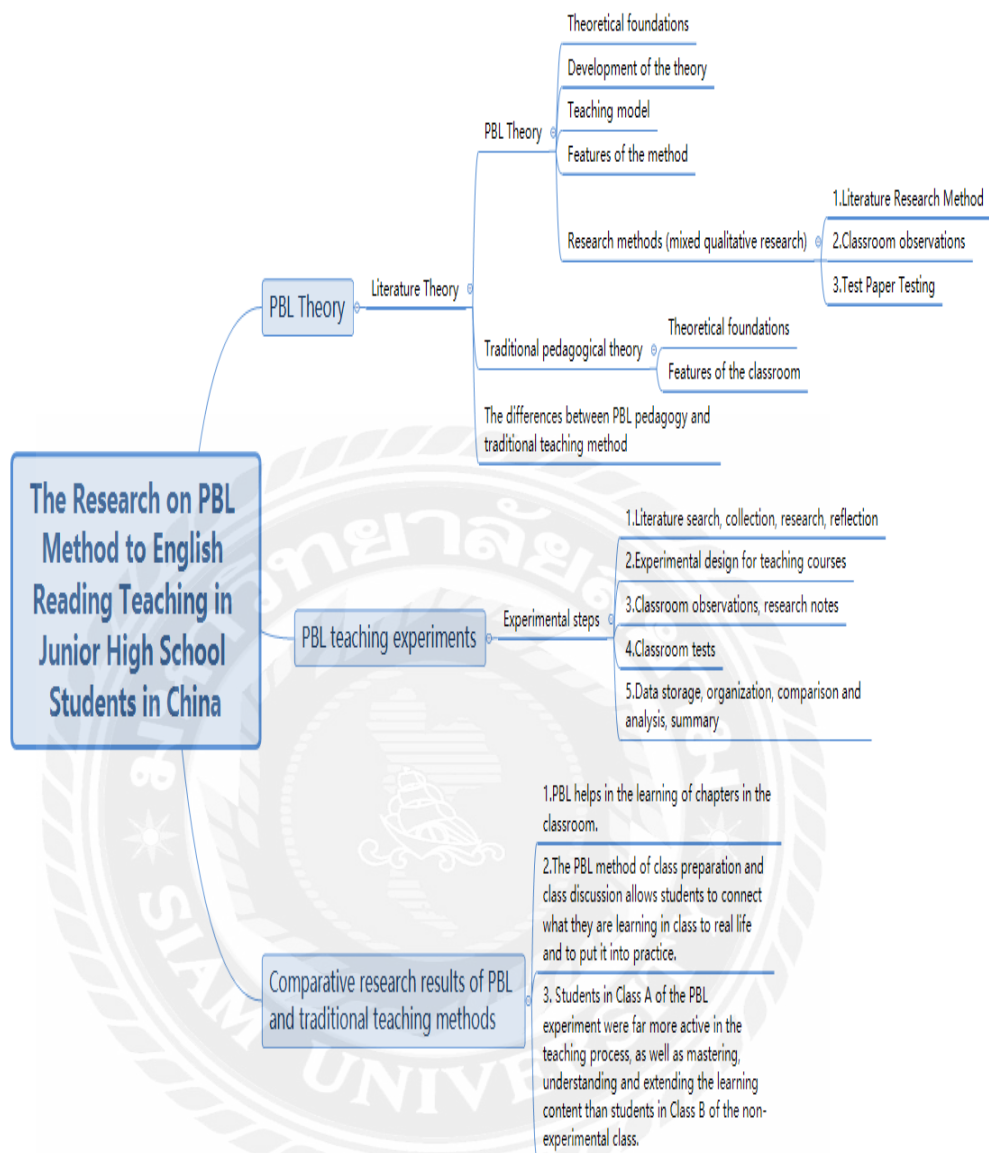


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

2. Literatures Review

2.1 Theoretical basis of PBL teaching method

The full name of the PBL method is Problem-based Learning. It was first introduced in medical education in the 1950s and has been adapted in more than 60 medical schools, and was founded in Canada in 1969 by Barrows, an American professor of neurology, as an independent learning model (Chi, 2018). The model emphasizes the need for learners to construct and explore on their own, giving full play

to the active inquiry nature of learning (Tao, 2015).

2.2 Development of the theory of PBL teaching method

2.2.1. PBL is now known by two full names, Problem Based Learning and Project Based Learning, as a systematic approach to teaching and learning that allows students to apply their learning knowledge and skills in complex authentic contexts or under carefully designed tasks to complete an extended learning exploration (Buck, 2007). Whether problem-based learning or project-based learning, learners cannot do without an authentic and effective contextual task. The PBL approach is student development oriented and stimulates students to explore and actively innovate (Liu, 2015).

2.2.2. Dewey's "Pragmatism" The theoretical basis of the PBL method can be traced back to the "learning by doing" in the pragmatism theory proposed by the American educator John Dewey (1915). The PBL approach also reflects Dewey's "tri-centric theory" (experience-centered, child-centered and activity-centered), which focuses on student development, allowing students to learn through practical activities and emphasizing the acquisition of experience, i.e. practical problem-solving skills (Chen, 2018).

2.2.3. Bruner's "Discovery Learning" is a theory of discovery learning put forward by Bruner, a famous American educator. He argued that teachers should not provide students with the content of learning directly, but rather provide them with a problematic situation in which they are simply given facts (examples) and questions to actively consider and investigate, and then discover and master the principles and conclusions on their own. He proposed the process of 'discovery learning': ask a question - create a problem situation - test a hypothesis and draw a conclusion. The PBL method is a discovery learning approach in which students form hypotheses about the solution to a given situation, propose solutions to the task, and then develop their own solutions to the problem through a variety of exploratory activities that suggest the feasibility of the situation (Bruner, 1990).

2.3 Methodical model of PBL teaching method

The "PBL" teaching model is an effective way of practicing English, as it allows students to learn more independently in the context of the learning environment created by the problem-oriented principle (Chi, 2018). PBL is a problem-based learning approach based on the psychology of information processing and cognitive psychology,

which is part of the constructivist learning theory and is one of the "core principles" of the constructivist teaching reform. It is "a widely adopted core idea" in the conception of constructivist teaching reform (Buck, 2007).

2.4 Characteristics of the PBL teaching method

2.4.1. Start with a problem that needs to be solved, this problem is called a driving question.

2.4.2. Students investigate the driving problem in a realistic context and the problem-solving process resembles that of a subject specialist. Students learn and apply disciplinary ideas in the process of inquiry.

2.4.3. Teachers, students, and team members participate in collaborative activities to find solutions to problems together, similar to the social situations in which experts solve problems.

2.4.4. Teachers gave students help and provided them with scaffolding to help them improve their abilities as they participated in the activities.

2.4.5. Students create a set of workable products that solve problems. These are also known as artifacts and are the results of classroom learning that can be shared publicly. They emphasize the importance of setting learning in complex, meaningful problem situations where learners work collaboratively to solve real problems, thereby learning the science behind the problems and developing problem-solving skills and independent learning (Liu, 2015).

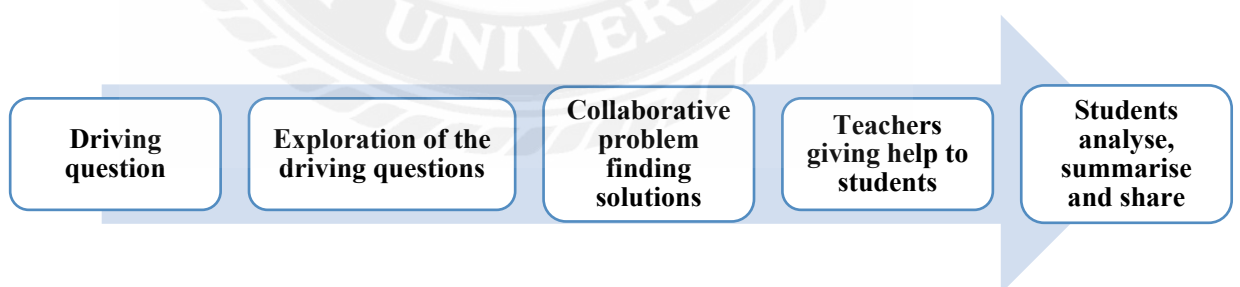


Figure 2: Five features under the PBL teaching method

2.5 Theoretical foundations of traditional method

The traditional classroom teaching method model is a teacher-centered, book-centered, and classroom-centered teaching model. It often forms a one-way installation by the teacher and passive acceptance by the students. It is easy to see that the defects of the traditional teaching mode are obvious, the key to which is that the students as the

cognitive subject are always in the position of passively receiving knowledge throughout the teaching process, and the initiative of students' learning is ignored or even suppressed (Sun, 2017).

2.6 Characteristics of the traditional classroom

The traditional classroom is characterized by three 'fixes' and three 'centers'. The three fixes are the classroom, the time and the teacher and students; the three centers are the classroom, the teacher, and the textbook (Guo, 2015).

2.7 Differences between teaching with the PBL method and traditional teaching methods

The PBL approach differs significantly from traditional discipline-based teaching methods in that it emphasizes student-initiated learning rather than teacher-led teachings, such as linking learning to a larger task or problem; engaging learners in the problem; designing authentic tasks; encouraging independent inquiry; stimulating and supporting high-level thinking; encouraging debate and encouraging reflection on the content and process of learning (Song, 2018). The PBL approach emphasizes problem-solving, the integration of multiple learning pathways, the role of social communication and cooperation, and a system of support and guidance, etc. It is an interdisciplinary approach to learning that promotes continuous thinking, requires students to consult extra-curricular materials, summaries, and organize their knowledge and skills to solve problems, and is conducive to the development of student's independent learning (Guo, 2015). It is the end of the teacher's "one word" approach and enables the integration of fragmented knowledge, in line with the new teaching philosophy of "the student is the main subject, and the teacher is the guide". The teacher is no longer a single source of knowledge, but a facilitator of knowledge construction, a subject matter expert and an adviser of information (Shen, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

This paper uses a mixed research methods with a focus on literature research methods, classroom observation, and test paper testing.



Figure 3: Four steps for research methodology

3.1 Teaching experiments

This paper focuses on the differences in teaching outcomes produced by the PBL method for the same teacher teaching the same content. The following results were obtained by observing the differences between the 50 students in class A and the 50 students in class B.

The students in class A which uses PBL teaching method could explore the questions designed by the teacher well in advance through individual and group collaboration, find information, discuss and so on to do a lot of relevant knowledge reserve about the classroom learning content Resolution; in the classroom students were more actively playing the main role of the classroom, sharing what they had learned, communicating and discussing with each other among classmates and groups; through the teacher's guidance and assistance with difficult content, the students can better understand, master and even extend their learning to their own lives: they write a Resolutions' List for themselves and try to implement it.

In the class B was almost always one-way teaching by the teacher, with very few students answering questions and discussing, resulting in a serious lack of a lively atmosphere in the whole class. The students' learning in the classroom was also seriously lacking in initiative, enthusiasm, in-depth thinking, discussion, communication, and exploration of the content, and seemed to be at the level of understanding the content (Suzie & Jane, 2017).

3.2 Classroom tests

The classroom test was used to test the reading chapters studied by students in the class A, after they had completed the same course content using the PBL method and the non-experimental class B using the traditional teaching method.

Table 1: Table shows the classroom test survey statistics of PBL English reading teaching experiment class A

PBL English Reading Instruction Test Survey Statistics Table										
Title No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total number	50									
No. of scored	0	0	0	2	2	4	5	15	6	17
Score rate	0%	0%	0%	4%	4%	8%	10%	30%	12%	34%
Pass Rate (≥ 6)	92%									

Table 2: Table shows the classroom test survey statistics of traditional English reading teaching experiment class B

Traditional English Reading Instruction Test Survey Statistics Table										
Title No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total number	50									
No. of scored	1	2	0	6	10	10	11	3	3	4
Score rate	2%	4%	0%	12%	20%	20%	22%	6%	6%	8%
Pass Rate (≥ 6)	62%									

4. Finding and Conclusion

4.1 Findings

From this study, it is clear that PBL is a high level of learning with 'problems' at its core, requiring students to grasp the complex connections between concepts and to apply them flexibly to specific problem situations. Teachers need to restore appropriate power to students, giving them as much choice and decision-making power as possible at all stages of the decision-making process, so that the true meaning of 'problem solving' can be realized, i.e. that the teaching and learning process is organized according to the intrinsic needs of the learners. Students realize that the successful achievement of group goals depends on the combined efforts of the group members (Chisholm,2005). During the learning process, students are allowed to successfully demonstrate their abilities, and they play the dual role of learner and teacher as they help others and receive help from others. The use of cooperative learning enables beneficial interpersonal interaction in the classroom so that students learn to communicate, negotiate and co-operate in the same way as they learn (Sun, 2017).

4.2 Conclusions

PBL teaching is an extremely complex and dynamic multi-factor structure and is a necessary means of achieving the ultimate goal of putting language learning into practice, i.e. allowing students to experience the 'usefulness' of language and to express and communicate freely. It respects the individual differences in learning and allows students to learn at their own pace, truly developing their self-learning, questioning, problem-solving, and other learning skills, and transforming from "learning" to "learning". (Guo, 2015). The combination of these two teaching philosophies and

experimental research is in harmony with each other in terms of educational objectives. In the face of the new era of the classroom, we need the unremitting persistence, the wisdom of teachers and students, and the cooperation of the team. Let us continue to discover, grow, and succeed in our exploration (Song, 2018).

I sincerely hope that every educator needs to understand that students are not machines and that we should respect their independence of thinking and see them as complete individuals, rather than just treating them as undergrown students. The construction and implementation of the "PBL" teaching model in junior English should be based on the development of the students' personalities, and we should put ourselves in the students' shoes. The "PBL" problem-based learning enables students to grow in self-awareness and confidence in both their studies and their lives. However, no matter how we promote the PBL design, teachers cannot completely control the learning process of their students. Only when students are free from the control of teachers and learn to think and learn independently can their enthusiasm and interest in learning be ignited and their learning initiative is mobilized (Suzie & Jane, 2017). This will help them to have the confidence to face all the challenges, to explore, and to become better learners so that they can be better prepared for a colorful and exciting life.

5. Recommendation

Although the study has had some success in improving the English language performance and reading skills of junior high school students, there is still a long way to go. Therefore, there are several recommendations that are made.

First of all, more research subjects are needed to demonstrate the breadth of the study's validity (Chisholm,2005). The effectiveness of the PBL method and to ensure that its results are more reliable.

Secondly, when the PBL approach is applied to teaching English reading in junior secondary schools, teachers should change their role from being the center to being the guide, giving students more freedom and space. However, teachers should prepare relevant resources and information in advance and guide students to a deeper understanding; tutor students to allow them to enter deeper exploration and integration with real life and practice of the content they are learning. And actively encourage teaching through PBL to guide students to become lifelong learners (Markham, Larmer, & Ravitz, 2003).

Finally, for teachers, the PBL teaching method, when applied to junior high school

English reading teaching, not only helps teachers to identify problems in teaching but also allows them to reflect on their teaching through students' feedback, to improve their teaching skills (Guo, 2015).



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